



# 2024

## ANNUAL FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS



**catawba county**  
north carolina

FOR THE  
FISCAL YEAR ENDED  
JUNE 30, 2024



# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

## CATAWBA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

**THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS** is comprised of a five-member board elected at large on staggered terms in a countywide election. The Board of Commissioners is the policy-making and legislative authority for the County. It is responsible for adopting the annual budget, approving zoning and planning issues and other matters related to the health and welfare of the County. The Board appoints citizens to boards and commissions and appoints the County Manager.



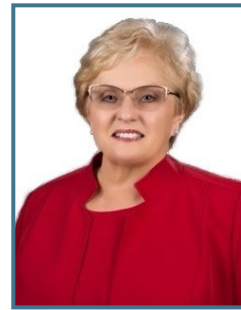
C. Randall Isenhower  
*Chair*



Austin Allran  
*Vice Chair*



Robert C. Abernethy, Jr.  
*Commissioner*



Barbara G. Beatty  
*Commissioner*



Cole Setzer  
*Commissioner*

**THE COUNTY MANAGER**, the Chief Executive Officer and responsible for implementing policies set by the Board of Commissioners and for managing daily operations of County government. Catawba County provides its citizens with a broad range of services including public safety, environmental protection, health and human services, cultural and recreational programs, economic development and education. The County's Values Statement reflects the County's public service priorities.

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## DOING WHAT'S RIGHT

Integrity, respect, transparency, professionalism

## DOING WHAT MATTERS MOST

Service to others, initiative, empowerment, prioritization, authenticity

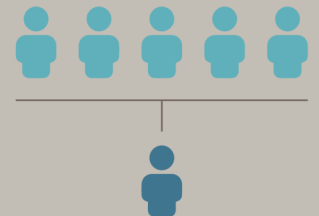
## DOING IT TOGETHER

Teamwork, inclusion, stewardship, empathy, patience

## DOING IT WELL

Innovation, accountability, operational excellence, continuous improvement

### BOARD-MANAGER





# MANAGEMENT'S MESSAGE

## Citizens of Catawba County:

We are pleased to present the 2024 Catawba County Financial Highlights. This report is an opportunity to present the financial activity of Catawba County in an open and transparent manner.

In today's complex world of financial reporting, analyzing financial statements can be a challenge—especially for those without accounting backgrounds. This report was designed to address that issue by providing a recap of your County government's finances in an easy to read format.

The financial statements used in this report are simplified and condensed to reflect financial information regarding Catawba County's government-wide information. The County's government-wide financial statements provide information on revenues, expenses, and net position of Catawba County for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

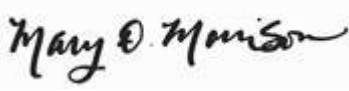
Most of the information in this report is drawn from the financial information appearing in the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024. The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report is a more detailed and complete financial presentation prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and was audited by the County's independent external auditors. While the financial data in this report conforms with GAAP, the statistical, economic and demographic data are taken from various sources and are not necessarily GAAP based. Additional financial information can be found in the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, available at Catawba County public libraries and online at [www.catawbacountync.gov/depts/finance/](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/depts/finance/).

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact the Chief Financial Officer at (828) 465-8210, or write to: Chief Financial Officer, Catawba County, P.O. Box 389, Newton, NC 28658.

Sincerely,



Mary Furtado  
County Manager



Mary Morrison  
Chief Financial Officer

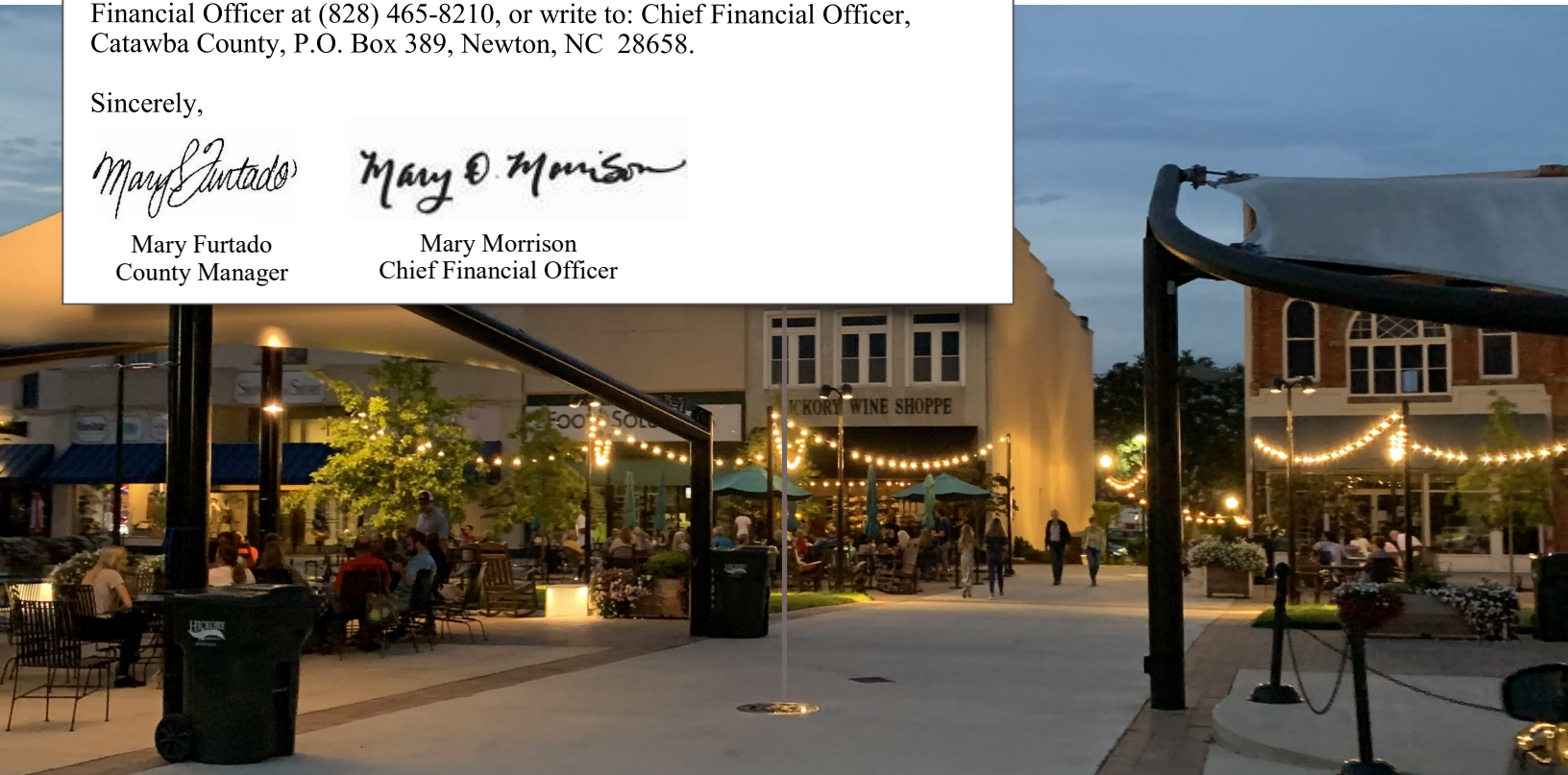
## CONDENSED FINANCIAL STATEMENT

This publication provides you, the public, with an easy-to-read overview of the County's finances.



Scan for the Annual  
Comprehensive  
Financial Report

The information is derived from the County's 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report includes more detailed information, was prepared in conformance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), and was audited by the County's independent auditors. The 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report is available for review on the County's website at [www.catawbacountync.gov](http://www.catawbacountync.gov)





# ABOUT CATAWBA COUNTY



Catawba County encompasses a 414 square mile area and is located just east of North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. Nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains and bordered by the Catawba River, Catawba County offers the hospitality of a mid-sized community with a reach that extends across a fast-growing region. Catawba County is conveniently located within a 1-hour drive to Charlotte, Asheville, and Winston-Salem, and affords easy access to both Interstate 40 and Highway 321.

Catawba County was officially established on December 12, 1842 when Lincoln County was divided by an act of the North Carolina General Assembly. The County has eight cities and towns within its boundaries, and is home to a population of 166,196 residents, which positions it as the 18<sup>th</sup> largest county in North Carolina and one of the 29 urban counties with population of 100,000 or more.

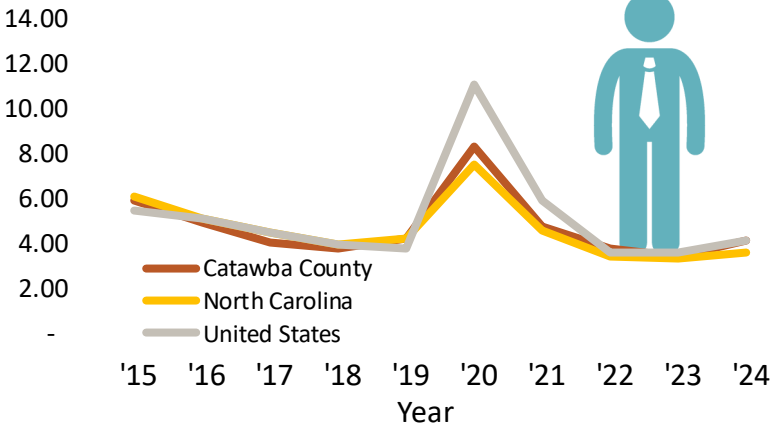
Catawba County has it all—beautiful climate, with four seasons that are distinct as they are mild, unique places to work, low cost of living, vast array of recreational opportunities, arts and culture and an unparalleled lifestyle. It is an ideal place to live, work, play, raise a family and retire.





# ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



### Local Economy

Catawba County is part of the Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties.

Employment figures in the MSA reflect a strong economy, adding 7,938 jobs between June 2021 and June 2024, a 5% increase. Catawba County's June 2024 unemployment rate mirrors the North Carolina rate of 4.1%.

### Economic Development

Catawba County has taken a proactive, aggressive approach in charting its economic future through targeted expansion. Job gains have been made as a result of significant expansion projects—funded both privately and in partnership with the public sector—occurring in a wide range of industries from traditional manufacturing to high-tech. This mix of public-private partnership and private investment underscores the County's balanced economic health and resiliency.

In 2023-2024, over \$191 million in industry investments and 424 new jobs were announced in the County.

2024

## TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

NC Department of Commerce



Catawba County School System



Catawba Valley Medical Center



Corning Optical Communications LLC



CommScope



Target Stores Div.



Catawba County Government



Wal-Mart Associates Inc.



Duke LifePoint/Frye Reg. Med. Ctr.



Apple, Inc.



GKN Driveline Newton

### YEAR

### BUSINESS INVESTMENT

### JOBS

2023	\$161,150,000	335
2022	\$1,070,000,000	157
2021	\$856,477,427	1,199
2020	\$153,402,855	776
2019	\$110,233,000	423
2018	\$129,706,086	531
2017	\$1,448,570,000	361
2016	\$199,575,188	490
2015	\$488,755,982	420
2014	\$137,374,352	320
2013	\$22,704,651	498
Total	\$4,777,949,541	5,510

A sampling of the companies include:

- **Steele Warehouse**, a leading steel service center, announced in March 2024 an investment of \$27 million in expansion and 58 jobs over the next 4 years.



- **Millwork & Panel, LLC**, a residential siding manufacturer, announced an expansion of its current facility, investing \$27.8 million and creating 48 jobs over 5 years.



- **Wanzl North America**, a leading solution provider and global manufacturer of retail equipment, announced in November 2023 investment of \$15 million and 10 high-skilled positions over the next 3 years.

- **Commscope**, a global leader in the infrastructure solutions for communication networks, announced expansion of its current facility with an investment of \$60.3 million and 250 jobs over the next 4 years.



While Catawba County's economy is built upon a large industrial base (with 26.5% of its workforce in manufacturing), deliberate and targeted growth in several key sectors has resulted in a more balanced economic composition today than what existed a decade ago.



## Deliberately Driving Workforce Development

Building upon the core strengths of the local economy, Catawba County has made significant strides in preparing its workforce with the skills to meet current and future labor needs of local employers.

Programs have been designed to target high-school students as well as college-aged students and adult learners to ensure the County's workforce is poised to help local businesses thrive. Several key initiative include:



### K-64

K-64 is a systemic approach to shaping future careers and meeting workforce demands

by connecting students and employers throughout the educational curriculum. K-64 increases student and employer engagement in educational programs proven to prepare a qualified workforce by collaborating with employers to align courses of study with workforce needs, connecting students to real-world careers and related curriculum choices from early on, and empowering adults to enhance employability in a dynamic work environment.

### Appalachian State University

opened a new campus in Hickory in August 2023 with an inaugural enrollment of 363. The new 15.7 acre campus offers more than 100 undergraduate majors along with a host of on-site student services.



**Lenoir-Rhyne University** offers a program called the Catawba County Promise to provide a minimum of 50% off tuition for any first-year undergraduate student with a 3.5 or higher high school GPA who is a resident of North Carolina or to a transfer undergraduate student with more than 30 attempted hours from an accredited North Carolina community college and a 3.5 GPA.





### Manufacturing Solutions Center (MSC)

A branch of Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC), MSC is focused on helping manufacturers increase sales, and improve product quality and production efficiency. MSC brings all of the resources needed to launch a product together, under one umbrella.



### Microsoft Microsoft Datacenter Academy

The Microsoft Datacenter Academy collaborates with CVCC to train students for skills and certifications to enable students to gain employment in the growing cloud computing and IT sectors.

### Corning Fiber Optic Training Center

CVCC has partnered with Corning Incorporated to establish a first-of-its-kind broadband training facility. Trainers from Corning provided hands-on education in skills needed to design, engineer, install and manage high-speed fiber broadband networks, creating opportunity to develop the future broadband workforce.



Recognizing the need to be proactive and take action to stimulate economic growth, Catawba County invests in the following partnerships and strategies:

### Trivium Corporate Center

Trivium Corporate Center is a 378-acre Class A Business Park being developed jointly by Catawba County and the City of Hickory. There have been 4 companies locating within the park so far—for a total of \$352M in private investment supporting the creation of 635 jobs. Projects include Corning, Cataler North America, American Fuji Seal and Gusmer Enterprises.



Based on the success of the Trivium Corporate Center, Catawba County and the City of Hickory acquired 108 acres directly across from Trivium Corporate Center to develop Trivium Corporate Center East. The new site's conceptual plan has allocated six more lots for manufacturing or flex building development.

### Southeastern Catawba County Business Park

Catawba County currently owns 78 acres in the fast-growing southeastern part of the County. The land, just northeast of N.C. 16 at N.C. 150, is planned for development as a business park aimed at growing jobs and the tax base in the area. The County received a grant from the Golden Leaf Foundation which assisted with the completion of the sewer line extension to serve the future business park.



## Strong Medical & Healthcare Presence

Well positioned to meet the future medical and health care needs of its citizens, the County is home to a prospering medical and healthcare community and two large medical centers.



**Catawba Valley Medical Center (CVMC)** is the largest not-for-profit community hospital in the region. While technically owned by Catawba County, CVMC is completely self-supporting. Based on the quality and consistency of medical care provided, CVMC has received numerous awards in recent years, including:

- Women's Choice Awards for Best Hospital in patient experience and various medical specialties
- American Nurses Credentialing Center—Magnet Designation
- The Joint Commission Top Performer Quality Measures in Heart Attack, Pneumonia, Surgical Care, Stroke and Perinatal Care

## Long Term Financial Planning

Catawba County's economy continues to grow as reflected in strong retail sales, increasing building permit activity, business investment and the County's low unemployment rate. The County is taking deliberate steps to accelerate and reinforce this economic growth.

Over the course of the past couple of years, the Board of Commissioners led a strategic planning pro-

cess aimed at enhancing and promoting the County's quality of life in order to attract working-age families and to continue to grow the economy.

In December 2023, the Board of Commissioners assessed the current strategic plan, recognizing its' success in driving economic and population growth in the county. In the coming years, the County will continue to focus on anticipating future service pressures and delivering responsive services to the community.

In looking towards the future, the strategic plan invests in services and infrastructure to support five major focus areas as well as general service needs. Some of the highlights of these investments include:

## Education

The Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget provides \$11.1 million in schools and community college capital needs, \$4 million in school construction projects, and a 7.8 percent per pupil current expense increase for the three public school systems.

## Healthy, Safe Community

To address public safety needs, the budget includes the addition of 4 new road patrol deputy positions and necessary equipment. In addition, Opioid Settlement funds have been authorized to fund the Post Overdose Response Team and Community Paramedicine pilot program.

## Community Planning and Development

The budget includes \$4.7 million for water and sewer projects and \$2.4 million in solid waste capital projects.

The County is able to make these investments within available revenues and established in Fiscal Year 2023/24 a new property tax rate of \$0.3985 for every \$100 of valuation, thanks to a strong tradition of fiscal stewardship and conservative budgeting.



# 2024 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

General Fund revenues in 2024 increased \$6.6M compared with the previous year. The General Fund is the primary operating fund of the County and supports the regular day-to-day operations.



## REVENUES

Monies received from a variety of sources

Local governments rely heavily on tax revenues to provide services including education, public safety, human services, parks, libraries and general government. Catawba County is no exception, 72% of the total operating revenue is attributed to taxes, which consist mainly of property tax and sales tax.

## EXPENDITURES

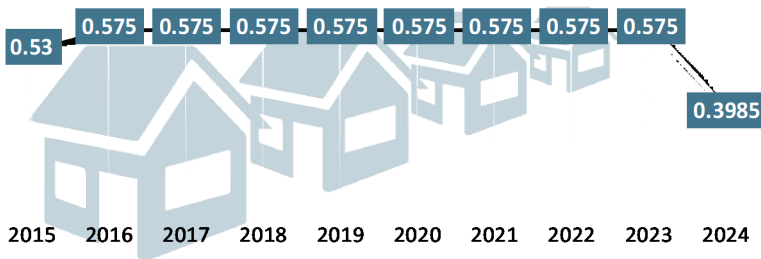
Monies spent to provide services to citizens



**PROPERTY TAX**, the County's largest single revenue source, accounted for \$122.7 million or 52% of general fund revenue. The property tax rate of \$.3985 for every \$100 of value is below the State average of \$.6648 making Catawba County's tax rate the 8th lowest of all 100 counties in North Carolina.

## PROPERTY TAX RATE

per \$100 assessed value



**SALES AND OTHER TAXES** accounted for \$45.8 million or 19% of general fund revenue. Catawba County remains a retail magnet, capturing 59% of the \$6 billion in retail sales from the four-county Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Taxable retail sales increased by 2% from the prior year. Shopping in Catawba County helps support local business and keeps property taxes low.

Once the County collects revenues, the funds must be spent effi-



ciently to provide services to citizens and businesses. General Fund expenditures increased \$11.6M, or approximately 6% from the prior year. This is a combination of increases across several functions. Significant variances include: (a) Public Safety increase of \$4.8M for 4 additional school resource officers, replacement of several vehicles in sheriff department and the purchase of equipment used by EMS, (b) Human Services increase of \$3M for mandated child and adult protective services and foster care within Social Services along with additional staffing needs within Public Health, and (c) a \$2.2M increase in Education for a 5% increase per pupil current expense funding for public schools.

In 2024, the General Fund expenditures of \$220M were lower than budget by \$33.5M. This conservative approach to spending is a hallmark of Catawba County.

## SALES TAX

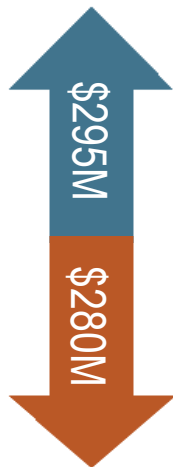
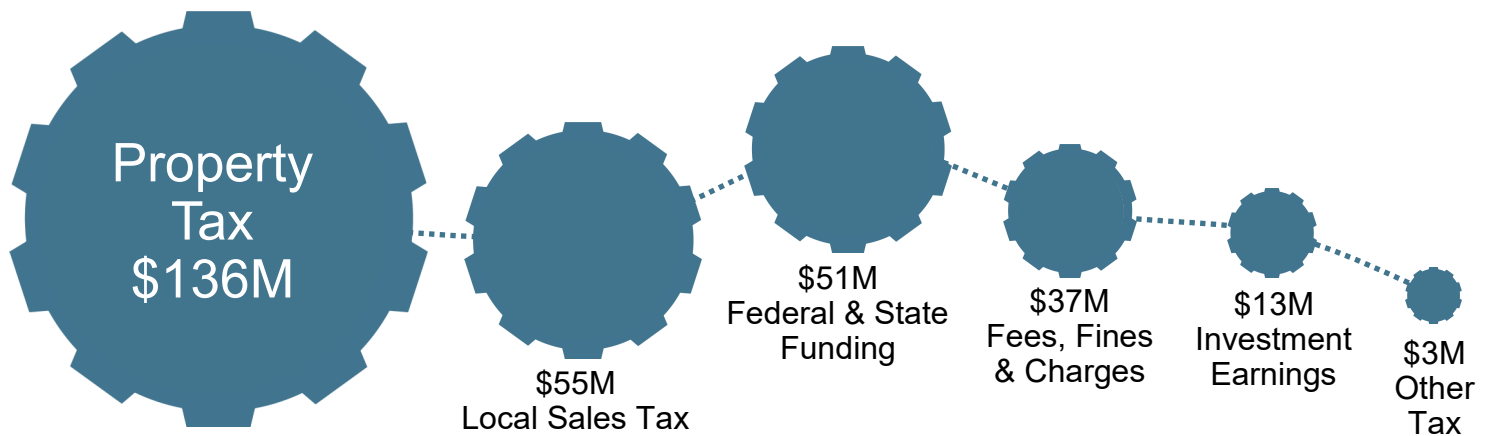
Catawba County receives 2.25 cents of the total sales tax rate of 7 cents.

It shares proceeds from the first 2 cents with municipalities on a per capita basis.

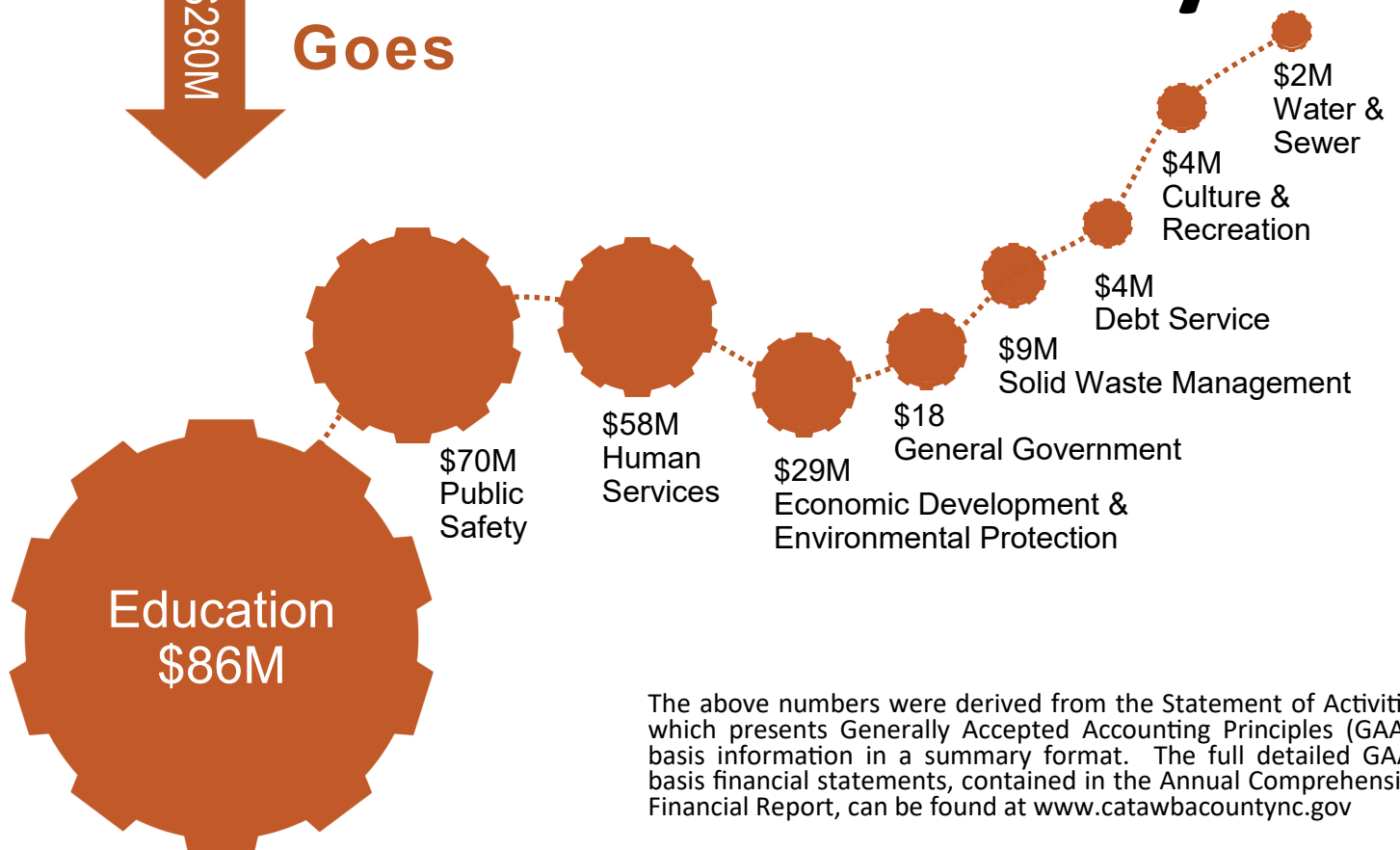
The remaining .25 cent, approved by County voters in 2007, is primarily dedicated to supporting the Justice/Public Safety Center expansion, public school operations, economic development, and water & sewer infrastructure.



- State
- All Counties
- .25¢ Local Option



## Comes From Where the Money Goes



The above numbers were derived from the Statement of Activities which presents Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) basis information in a summary format. The full detailed GAAP basis financial statements, contained in the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, can be found at [www.catawbacountync.gov](http://www.catawbacountync.gov)



# NET POSITION

The County Activities and Net Position tables offer a detailed snapshot of what the County owns (assets and deferred outflows) offset by what the County owes (liabilities and deferred inflows). The difference between what the County owns and what the County owes is known as net position.

Positive net position indicated a measure of financial stability. For fiscal year 2024, the County's net position increased by \$15,364,221 to \$341.5M. Over the past three years, the County has maintained a positive net position. In 2024, total assets reached \$646.2M while liabilities totaled \$304.7M resulting in a net position of \$341.5M. The three components of net position are:

**Net Investment in Capital Assets:** The largest portion, approximately \$219.5M or 64%, represents the County's investment in capital assets less any related debt used to construct or acquire those assets. The

	2024	2023	2022
<b>NET POSITION - Primary Government</b>			
Net Investment in capital assets	\$ 219,509,295	\$ 210,194,781	\$ 206,021,372
Restricted	38,499,089	77,672,252	36,821,265
Unrestricted	83,516,480	38,293,610	42,457,784
<b>Total Net Position</b>	<b>\$ 341,524,864</b>	<b>\$ 326,160,643</b>	<b>\$ 285,300,421</b>

County used these capital assets to provide services to citizens, consequently, they are not available for future spending.

**Restricted Net Position:** This portion of net position is subject to external restrictions on how they may be used. External restrictions include those imposed by grantors, regulators, or restrictions imposed by legislation. Total restricted net position is approximately 11%.

**Unrestricted Net Position:** The remaining portion, 24%, is unrestricted, representing resources that are available for services.

Several particular aspects influenced the change in net position. Property, sales and other taxes increased by \$3.5M while investment earnings increased by \$10M due to rise in interest rates.

The County incurs a number of expenses to provide services to its citizens. Significant increases include: (a) Education increase of \$16.9M as renovations to various public schools begin, (b) \$6.9M increase for public safety and (c) \$3.4M increase in human services.

	2024	2023	2022
<b>NET POSITION</b>			
Assets and Deferred Outflows	\$ 646,203,831	\$ 640,628,836	\$ 549,407,280
Liabilities and Deferred Inflows	304,678,967	314,468,193	264,106,859
<b>Net Position</b>	<b>\$ 341,524,864</b>	<b>\$ 326,160,643</b>	<b>\$ 285,300,421</b>

<b>CHANGE IN NET POSITION</b>			
Revenues	\$ 295,086,660	\$ 285,453,557	\$ 254,882,364
Expenses	279,722,439	254,877,341	214,736,373
Changes in Net Position	\$ 15,364,221	\$ 30,576,216	\$ 40,145,991
Net Position - Beginning	326,160,643	285,300,421	245,154,430
*Restatement	-	10,284,006	-
<b>Net Position - Ending</b>	<b>\$ 341,524,864</b>	<b>\$ 326,160,643</b>	<b>\$ 285,300,421</b>

## GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Most of the County's basic services such as education, public safety, human resources, parks, and general government are included here. Sales and property taxes, grant contributions and charges for services finance most of these activities.

Governmental activities is **64.9%** of the County's net position

## BUSINESS-TYPE ACTIVITIES

Other County services such as solid waste management, water and sewer are intended to recover all or a significant portion of their costs through user fees and charges.

Business-type activities is **35.1%** of the County's net position

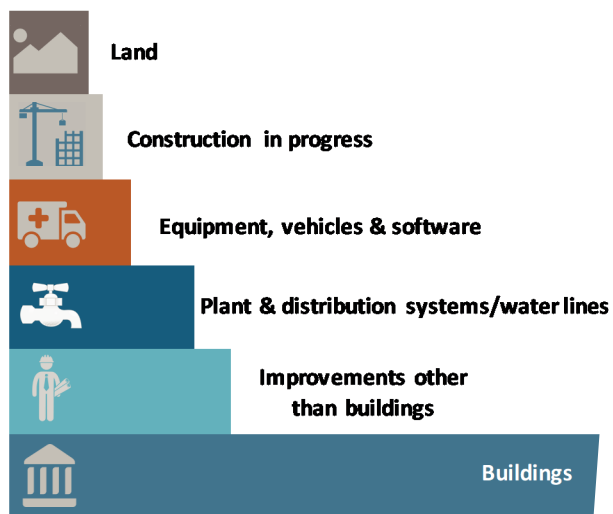
# CAPITAL ASSETS

Catawba County continues strategic investments in the high priority areas of education, public safety, economic development and quality of life. These assets include land, buildings, infrastructure, machinery & equipment and vehicles.

As of June 30, 2024, the County's capital assets (net of depreciation) totaled \$255,536,622 an increase of \$4.8M over the prior year.

- Increase in buildings with the completion of the new St. Stephens's Emergency Medical Services base.
- Increase in construction in progress for the purchase of the East Campus building from CVCC to be repurposed as a new agriculture resource center and public education center for the County.
- Purchase of new vehicles to be used by the sheriff patrol officers and purchase of four new ambulances to be used by EMS.
- Increase in the water and sewer fund for the construction of water and sewer infrastructure.
- Construction of new landfill cells and equipment.

## Catawba County's Total Capital Assets (net of depreciation)





# CAPITAL PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



## ST. STEPHENS EMS BASE

In April 2024, the County celebrated the completion of the newly constructed St. Stephens EMS Base. The new \$3M 4,248 square foot building nearly doubles the size of the former St. Stephens base on Springs Road. The new facility features four drive through ambulance bays to provide quicker entry and exit for County ambulances and emergency response vehicles.



## NEWTON-CONOVER HIGH SCHOOL

Phase one of construction is underway on the \$50 million renovation to Newton-Conover High School. Construction will consist of a new academic wing while the two-story building's bottom floor will feature a new competition gymnasium and state-of-the-art fitness facility. Construction is expected to be completed in 2027.



## MAIDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Late 2024 saw the completion of a new Maiden Elementary School to replace an aging school to better serve students in grade PK, K-6. The new 93,000 square feet, \$29M construction includes cafeteria, playfields, walking tracks and gymnasium.



## DIGITAL NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

In the fall of 2024, Catawba County announced the launch of its Digital Navigator outreach program aimed at equipping citizens with technology skills they need to succeed. Two bilingual digital navigators will operate a mobile computer lab tailored to provide digital literacy training to individuals throughout Catawba County, right where they are, providing access to internet resources, navigating online healthcare information, staying connected with loved ones, and engaging with online communities.

# LONG-TERM DEBT OBLIGATIONS

The County’s large capital improvement projects normally require long-term financing. The outstanding debt obligations consist of the following purposes: Education, Public Safety, Water & Sewer Projects and Economic Development.

As of June 30, 2024, the County’s outstanding long-term debt totaled \$160.4M, a decrease of \$17.5M over the prior year.

## BOND RATING

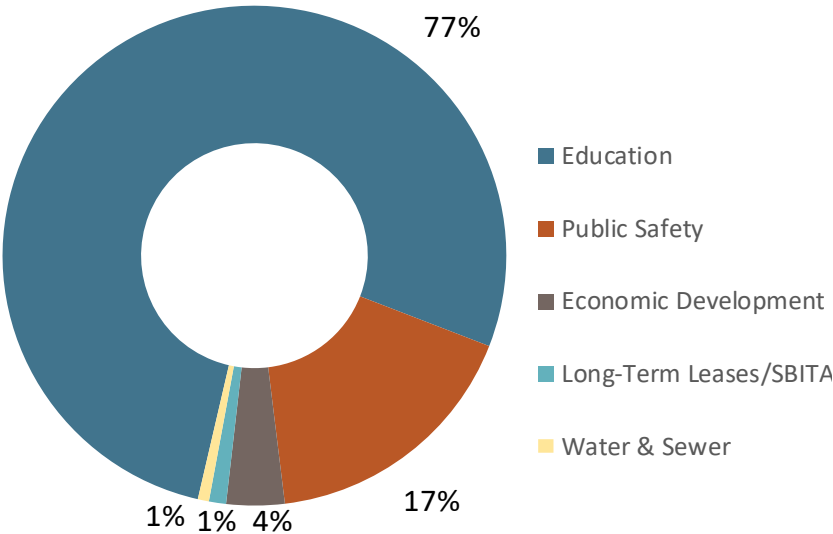
The County obtains a credit rating or evaluation of its credit-worthiness by an independent rating agency. The County has maintained a Moodys Investors Service issuer bond rating of Aa1 and Standard and Poor’s AA issue bond rating.

Exceptional bond ratings save the County money by securing lower interest rates on its debt. This stable bond rating is a clear indication of the sound fiscal condition of the County.

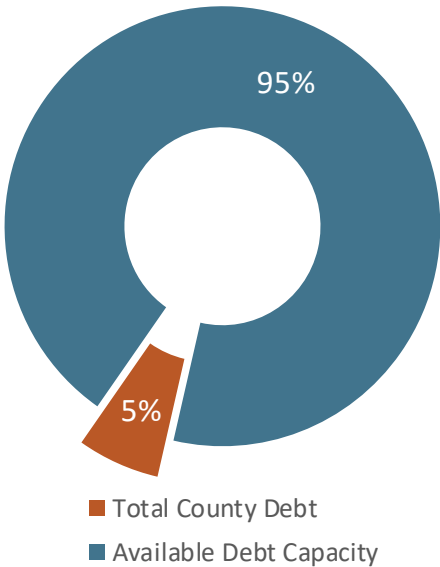
## DEBT CAPACITY

North Carolina general statutes limit the amount of debt that a unit can issue. The County’s total debt outstanding of \$151.6M is 5% of the legal debt available by general statute.

## USES OF OUTSTANDING DEBT



## COUNTY DEBT CAPACITY



	2024	2023	2022
TOTAL DEBT OUTSTANDING - Primary Government			
Certificate of Participation	\$ 930,000	\$ 1,890,000	\$ 2,880,000
Installment Purchases	46,552,667	57,246,333	68,243,000
Qualified School Const. Bonds	27,808,553	27,808,553	27,808,553
Limited Obligation Bonds	82,849,648	88,528,602	48,816,483
Long-term Leases	1,765,214	1,946,126	1,241,988
Federal Revolving Loan	450,000	525,000	600,000
Total Debt Outstanding	\$ 160,356,082	\$ 177,944,614	\$ 149,590,024





# CATAWBA COUNTY AT A GLANCE



Founded on  
**DECEMBER 12, 1842**



Population  
**166K**



Median Age  
**42yrs**



Median Household Income  
**\$55K**



Registered Voters  
**114K**



Median Housing Value  
**\$335K**

## POPULATION DIVERSITY

US Census 2023 Estimate

- White (73.3%)
- Hispanic or Latino (10.8%)
- Black or African American (9.0%)
- Asian (4.9%)
- Two or More Races (2.2%)
- American Indian (0.6%)
- Other Race (0.2%)

## POPULATION AGE

US Census 2021 Estimate



\*Percentages add to over 100% because Hispanic individuals may identify in different races and then reported in multiple categories here applicable.



Government Finance Officers Association

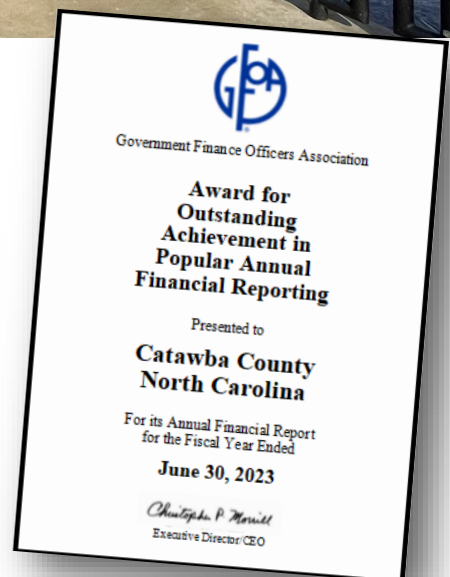
*Triple Crown Winner*



Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in  
Financial Reporting—*42nd consecutive year*

Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award—*15th year*

Distinguished Budget Presentation Award—*35th year*





Visit us online at  
[www.catawbacountync.gov](http://www.catawbacountync.gov)



Scan for more info  
on Catawba County



Catawba County, North Carolina  
Popular Annual Financial Report  
Year Ended June 30, 2024



Prepared by Catawba County Finance Department